

CORRESPONDENCE

Divorce for Insanity

To the Editor, Eugenics Review

SIR,—The recent defeat of the bill making insanity a ground for divorce shows the futility of the present tactics of marriage-law reformers. Lord Gorell has suggested, and it seems a sound idea, that the non-controversial parts of the Royal Commission's report should be put forward first and passed in order to break the ice and clear the ground. Then the way would be open for a straight fight on the divorce proposals.

The Churches approved the following recommendations of the Commission. A party to a marriage should be entitled to petition for a declaration of nullity :

1. When the other party, though of sufficient understanding to consent to a marriage, is at the time of the marriage either of unsound mind in other respects or in a state of incipient mental unsoundness which becomes definite within six months after marriage, and the first party is at the time of the marriage ignorant of the fact, provided that :

- (a) the suit is instituted within one year of the marriage,
- (b) that there has not been any marital intercourse after discovery of the defect.

2. Where the other party is at the time of the marriage subject to epilepsy or to recurrent insanity, and such fact has been concealed by such party or his or her parents or either of them, or anyone who has control over such party and is aware of the intended marriage, from the first party, who remains ignorant of the fact at the time of the marriage; with similar limitations as in the previous case.

3. Where one of the parties at the time of the marriage is suffering from a venereal disease in a communicable form, and the fact is not disclosed by the party or, if they know of it, by his parents to the other party who remains ignorant of the fact at the time; with similar limitations as in the previous cases.

4. Where a woman is found to be pregnant at the time of her marriage, her condition being due to intercourse with some man other than her husband, and such condition being undisclosed to her husband who is ignorant of the fact at the time of marriage; with similar limitations as in the previous cases.

5. Where there has been wilful refusal, without reasonable cause on the part of the other party, to permit intercourse, and where there has in fact been no intercourse.

Also, that a party to a marriage shall be entitled to obtain an order for presumption of

death, on which being made absolute after six months the applicant shall be entitled to contract a valid marriage :

1. Where the other party to the marriage has been continually absent from the first party for the space of seven years and shall not have been known by such party to be living within that time.

2. Where a party to a marriage, who reasonably supposes the other party to the marriage to be dead, but the fact cannot be definitely ascertained, satisfies the Court that there is reasonable ground for declaring the second party to the marriage to be dead.

In such cases the Court should have power to make provision for the applicant and the children of the marriage out of the estate of the absentee.

If marriage law reformers would concentrate on these reforms, which would have an easy passage through Parliament, they would relieve a lot of suffering and pave the way to future success.

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Eugenics and Christianity

To the Editor, Eugenics Review

SIR,—It is to be hoped that the Council of the *Eugenics Society* will not act on Mr. Norman A. Thompson's suggestion in your January issue, and put out a manifesto against Christianity. It is one thing to criticize particular opinions which may not be held by Christians in common; but it would be quite another thing to take up an attitude of general hostility to Christianity. I do not believe the Council will do this.

Eugenics and Christianity are not so unlike one another as Mr. Thompson seems to think. When you returned my article some weeks ago, you invited me to write you a few lines about any special point. The point I made to conclude with is such a one. Eugenics is a great movement; but it is particularist. Even if it wins out, it will not save the world as a whole, only a part of it, the higher stocks and such as have their patronage.

Just so, militant practical Christianity is particularist. It contemplates the saving of a minority, the few who enter in by the strait gate.

But now, particularist movements serve their turn, and are then superseded by universalist movements. Militant Christianity is itself

universalist, relatively to the particularist Judaism which it superseded.

Such movements, exemplifying more or less fully the principle of universalism, aim at the saving of the world or perfecting of the universe. In science, such a thinker as Wilhelm Bölsche elaborates this idea. He shows in the last chapter of his *Liebesleben in der Natur* how the principle of universalism may work out. In religion, while we recognize the claims of the particularist Christianity upon conduct, as of immediate importance, we should not forget that every period of Christian history has produced thinkers and theologians who have perceived the further, universalist, significance of the Christian idea held in its fullness; and who by *a priori* reasoning, biblical exegesis, and other intellectual means, have striven to illustrate and present that aspect of the idea.

The Council of the *Eugenics Society* may prefer preserving an attitude to formulating a policy, in relation to religion. If it does feel called on to formulate a policy, I suggest that such a policy should rather approach Christianity than diverge from it; for while I am, *qua* scientist, a nobody, and *qua* Christian, a very imperfect one, yet I know enough both of the eugenist movement and of militant Christianity, to see that they have much in common; and I anticipate that both these great particularist movements, when they have done all that they are meant to do for the good of the world, will be superseded by, and absorbed into, a vaster universalist movement. The principles of this latter movement are implicit in Christianity—a fact which we acknowledge when we give to the Christ the title, Saviour of the world.

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Family Endowment

To the Editor, Eugenics Review

SIR,—In your January issue you were good enough to commend to the attention of your readers the proposals of the Family Endowment Society for the introduction of a system of Family Allowances into the teaching profession. At the same time you suggested that many of our publications dealt with schemes "designed to relieve only the poorest of the poor—dysgenic agencies which must arouse the whole-hearted opposition of eugenists."

"The poorest of the poor" already receive a form of Family Endowment in the dependents' allowances granted under Unemployment Insurance and Poor Law Relief; but it is true

that a good deal of our propaganda has been concerned with schemes confined to the wage-earning classes as a whole or to particular sections of them.

The economic arguments for spreading the cost of rearing the next generation are the same whether we apply them to the higher grades of the Civil Service or to coal miners. In the first case the financial burden of child dependency means unpleasant and often socially undesirable economies in the things which the middle classes have come to regard as necessary to a civilised life. In the second case it very often means a period of short commons in the matter of house-room, clothing and food which is likely to leave a permanent mark on the minds and bodies of those who experience it during the formative years of childhood. Many who believe most strongly in Family Endowment do so admittedly because, like Sir William Beveridge, they regard it as "the best step now possible to prevent avoidable poverty."

Such a proposal, you say, must arouse the whole-hearted opposition of eugenists. Why? Presumably because they fear a resulting increase in the birth rate among the least desirable sections of the population. It is, of course, impossible to dogmatise in a region where so many tangled motives meet, but there are certain considerations which seem to point away from this assumption.

In none of the concrete schemes so far proposed has the amount of the allowances been sufficient to cover more than a part of the cost of maintenance; the production and rearing of children would not become a paying concern. By lessening the economic motive for family limitation such allowances might tend to increase the birth rate *where it is already artificially low*, but among the lowest-paid classes in the community where the technique of limitation is scarcely known and where the prudential motive does not operate, they could scarcely have that effect. The determining factor here is surely to be found not in economic motives but in economic conditions. A system of Family Allowances which would save families from the worst degradation of poverty where hope and foresight are obliterated, which would increase the self-respect and independence of the mother and which would make possible better housing conditions, might be expected to have the same reactions as any other improvement in the standard of living in reducing the fertility of the classes affected by it.

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